

Claim Rejections

A) Claims 1-5, 13 and 15

On pages 2 to 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejects claims 1-5, 13 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Fujita (JP 2000-164322). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As explained in the Response filed August 23, 2005, claim 1 recites four basic steps for making a spark plug. These four steps include a provisional pressing, an adjustment bending in a widthwise direction, a measuring step and finally another pressing step based on the results of the measuring step. Thus, there are three steps of pressing or adjustment bending. In contrast, Fujita only has two pressing steps; namely a test press and an adjustment press process. This is clear in the Examiner's own statements in the "Response to Arguments" section on page 7 of the Office Action, where the Examiner states that Fujita teaches a first adjustment to calculate the spring back and then another pressing to reach the target gap. Since Fujita only has a test press and an adjustment press, the two Fujita pressing steps simply cannot constitute the three pressing/bending steps (1. provisional pressing, 2. adjustment bending and 3. pressing based on the results of measuring) set forth in claim 1.

Fujita is also deficient with regard to the claimed adjustment bending because it lacks any widthwise bending. The Examiner states that "one may say that the direction between the electrode and the pressing mechanism as shown in figure 16 is a 'widthwise' direction." (*see* Response to Arguments on page 7 of the Office Action). However, the Examiner fails to provide an explanation or reasoning as to how one may consider this the widthwise direction.

Furthermore, the provisional pressing of claim 1 is performed in the direction toward the leading end surface of the center electrode to decrease the spark gap. This is in contrast to the claimed adjustment bending, which is performed in a widthwise direction so as to eliminate eccentricity. As is seen from these recitations of claim 1, the provisional pressing and adjustment bending in claim 1 are not performed in the same direction. Since Fujita merely has pressing in a single direction, it cannot have both the claimed provisional pressing and adjustment bending, which are in different directions.

In view of the above arguments, claim 1 is allowable over Fujita.

Claims 2-5 and 13 depend from claim 1 and are therefore allowable at least because of their dependency.

Claim 15 sets forth a method of performing adjustment bending of spark plugs in the width direction. As explained above, Fujita fails to teach adjustment bending in the width direction at all, and therefore certainly does not teach the particular adjustment bending method of claim 15.

B) Claim 6

On page 4 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejects claim 6 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fujita. Applicants respectfully traverse.

Claim 6 depends from claim 1. Even if, for the sake of argument alone, it would have been obvious to modify Fujita as suggested by the Examiner, Fujita would still be deficient with respect to claim 1, and thus dependent claim 6, for at least the reasons outlined above.

C) Claims 7-12 and 14

On pages 4 to 7 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejects claims 7-12 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Fujita in view of Nakatani et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,741,963). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claims 7-12 and 14 depend from claim 1. The Examiner acknowledges that Fujita is deficient with respect to several features of claims 7-12 and 14, including obtaining an initial approximation function and performing the bending process based on a eccentricity to a final target deviation, but that these deficiencies can be corrected by Nakatani. However, Fujita is deficient with respect to more than the features acknowledged by the Examiner. Particularly, Fujita is deficient with respect to the features of claim 1, as explained above. Even if it were appropriate to modify Fujita with Nakatani as suggested by the Examiner, Nakatani would not correct the deficiencies of Fujita with respect to those features discussed above and dependent claims 7-12 and 14 would still be allowable over the combination of Fujita and Nakatani.

Also, as explained in Applicants' August 23 response, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have been motivated to modify Fujita with Nakatani. The Examiner has not responded to Applicants' arguments regarding the lack of motivation to modify Fujita with Nakatani presented in the August 23 response. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 7-12 and 14 are also allowable over the combined teachings and suggestions of Fujita with Nakatani

RESPONSE UNDER 37 C.F.R. §1.116
EXPEDITED PROCEDURE
APPLN. NO. 10/601,960

DOCKET NO. Q75539

at least because one of ordinary skill in the art would not have modified Fujita with Nakatani for the reasons already presented.

Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.


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Date: February 8, 2006